

JAN BOTH

(Utrecht 1618 - Utrecht 1652)

A Southern Landscape with a Ruin

signed 'Both' on a stone below the donkey (lower centre)
oil on panel
39 x 48.9 cm (15³/₈ x 9¹/₄ in)

Provenance: Mrs. Hoekstra;

by whom sold, London, Sotheby's, November 30, 1983, lot 76 where purchased by Richard L. Feigen & Co.;

with Richard L. Feigen & Co., New York;

from whom purchased by the previous collector.

THE SUN-DAPPLED LEAVES OF THE TREES AND THE gentle evening glow pervading *A Southern Landscape with a Ruin* are highly representative of Jan Both's much celebrated talent for depicting idyllic rural settings and skilful lighting effects. Both was one of the foremost figures among the second generation of Dutch Italianates and made a significant contribution to the movement with his highly detailed wooded landscapes. As is typical of a number of his paintings, the compositional format of the present work is based on the diagonal line of the dusty road cutting through a hilly landscape with trees and foliage growing profusely on either side. A man slowly makes his way along the path riding a weary and curiously undersized donkey that appears to struggle to support his weight. Next to them another man poses lethargically with his head cocked to one side and his hands leaning on a walking stick. Ahead, goats graze contentedly, while behind a boy scampers after a lone cow ambling down the path past the ruined tower guarding the hillside. The left of the canvas is framed by cliffs and the right opens onto an expansive view of the countryside.

While the figures add a lively dimension to the picture, the genius of *A Southern Landscape with a Ruin* lies in its careful and accurate depiction of the graceful tree trunks with their gold tinged leaves and the rich undergrowth lining the shadowy path. These same elements can be seen in Both's *Italian Landscape with a Path*, in the Hermitage, St. Petersburg, which also displays a rural view at dusk with travellers on a road (fig. 1). The Hermitage work is populated with more figures and greater activity but nevertheless has a similar feel of quiet serenity at the close of the day. Both images, although not recording actual places, were most probably based on studies from life, which imbues them with their striking naturalism.

According to J. von Sandrart, Both trained in Utrecht from the age of sixteen to nineteen with Gerrit van Honthorst (1592-1656).¹ Burke has suggested, however, that he was taught by Carel de Houth (d.1638), who was active in Utrecht in the 1630s and painted in the Italianate manner but with realistically formulated landscapes.² After his training, Both joined

his brother, Andries Both (c.1612-1641), in Rome, where he befriended artists such as Claude Lorraine (?1604-1682), with whom he collaborated on two series of large landscapes for the Buen Retiro Palace in Madrid. While in Rome, Both was associated with the *Bamboccianti*, or followers of Pieter van Laer (il Bamboccio) (1599-?1642), who painted low-life genre scenes. In his genre works, Both's concentration focused on the meticulous translation of light effects and the portrayal of different hours of the day, such as early morning or dusk, as can be seen here.

On his return to Utrecht around 1641, Both abandoned low-life genre images, turning his attention instead to Italianate landscapes. He collaborated with a number of artists throughout his career, the majority of whom specialised in staffage painting, including Nicholas Knüpfer (1603-?1660), Cornelis van Poelenburch (c.1594-1667) (cat. no. 79) and Jan Baptist Weenix (1621-?1660). Both was greatly imitated by his contemporaries and later artists, especially the third generation of Dutch Italianates such as Willem de Heusch (1625-1692) and Frederik de Moucheron (1633-1686) (see inventory), who adopted his compositional elements and subject matter.



Jan Both, *Italian Landscape with a Path*, 1645-1650,
The Hermitage, St. Petersburg (Figure 1)

¹ von Sandrart, J., *Teutsche Academie* (1675-9); ed. Peltzer, A. R., (Munich, 1925), pp. 184-185.

² Burke, J. D., *Jan Both: Paintings, Drawings and Prints* (Garland Publishing, New York, 1976)

